

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 998
By Burchett

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Manuel Cuevas, clothier to the stars.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to honor those exemplary citizens who contribute significantly to Tennessee's diverse and dynamic culture; and

WHEREAS, Manuel Cuevas, known simply as Manuel, is one such outstanding gentleman whose dazzling designs have left an indelible and unmistakable mark upon the entertainment and fashion industries, and his panoply of colorful creations will be forever intertwined within the fabric of American popular culture; and

WHEREAS, known as the top clothier to the stars, Manuel and his original designs have become a trademark of true Western American style; from every stitch to every rhinestone detail, every design is handmade and created individually for legends such as Salvador Dali, James Dean, and John Lennon; film stars Marlon Brando, Robert Redford, and Billy Bob Thornton; country singers Hank Williams, Jr., Porter Wagoner, Marty Stuart, George Jones, Dwight Yoakum, and Alan Jackson; and rockers Neil Young, Bob Dylan, Elton John, and Mick Jagger; and

WHEREAS, Manuel is the man who put Elvis in a jumpsuit, made Johnny Cash the "man in black," designed the Beatles' uniforms for the cover of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, decked out Linda Ronstadt, Emmylou Harris, and Dolly Parton for their *Trio* album cover, and created the Grateful Dead's skull and roses logo; and

WHEREAS, as a young boy growing up in a small village in Mexico, Manuel Martinez Cuevas, the fifth of twelve children, once sold oranges by the side of the road to make money for a ticket to see a Western movie starring the Lone Ranger; years later, as the chief designer

for famed Western wear purveyor Nudie Cohen, Manuel's first custom order was for Clayton Moore, the Lone Ranger himself; and

WHEREAS, at seven years old, Manuel fell in love with sewing machines and scissors and measuring tapes, and by the age of eleven he was designing and creating clothing; Manuel says that his early love of sewing stemmed from his fascination of being close to girls: "I like to be around girls and make them look beautiful"; and

WHEREAS, after studying Psychology and American History at the University of Guadalajara, Manuel came to the United States in the mid-1950s armed with skills in leather tooling, tailoring, designing, embroidering, and boot making, and took a job as a fitter with Sy Devore, the Hollywood tailor to clients including Frank Sinatra and Bob Hope; and

WHEREAS, soon afterwards, Manuel went to work at the studio of master embroiderer Viola Grae, who taught him how to use the embroidery machines that are critical to his design process today; Manuel's experience working for Nudie Cohen cemented his place in the world of Western wear. Nudie's use of rhinestones and spangles and flair for the dramatic were the perfect match for Manuel's skills and creative hunger, and Manuel soon became Nudie's chief designer; and

WHEREAS, after fourteen years with Nudie, Manuel branched out on his own and opened shop in Los Angeles, continuing his passion for creating an outer expression of the inner person with his designs; Manuel's creations can boost a performer's "star quality" and, as Manuel explains, "Image is vital for a performer. Stars are 60 percent image, 30 percent packaging, and 10 percent talent."; and

WHEREAS, in 1989, Manuel left California and traveled east with his sewing machines to Nashville, which offered not only a quieter lifestyle for himself and his family, but also the extravagant pageantry of the Grand Ole Opry; with over fifty years of incredible design work behind him, Manuel gives no indication of slowing down; in a recent interview Manuel commented, "As far as what I've done, to this day I don't think I've given the world 25 percent of what I really can do. I still think there's more to give, lots to give. There's nothing in my mind that inspires retirement."; and

WHEREAS, Manuel's designs are in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Smithsonian, and the Country Music Hall of Fame, and his work was recently showcased at the Frist Center for the Visual Arts in a 50-jacket celebration of every state in the union, *Manuel: Star-Spangled Couture*; and

WHEREAS, Manuel Cuevas exemplifies the creative spirit and passion for life so valued in Tennessee and our nation; and

WHEREAS, throughout his long and remarkable career, Manuel has demonstrated an extraordinary ability to inspire others to reach their fullest potential, winning the unbridled respect, admiration, and friendship of his peers and clients alike; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend Manuel Cuevas for his bountiful life of exceptional artistry as a custom clothier and for his invaluable contributions to American culture.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we extend to him our best wishes for every continued success in his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.